

to help songwriters; working with MURRAY and JONES and TIM SCOTT on permanently funding Black colleges; with BLUNT and SHELBY on the shark tank of the National Institutes of Health, creating new diagnostic tests, new ways; with BURR and DURBIN and MANCHIN and KING on the student loan law I mentioned; with CASEY and ENZI on the Perkins Act; with Harry Reid and Bill Frist, when they were leaders, on the America COMPETES Act.

None of this could have been done without an exceptional staff. But instead of thanking them in a rushed way now, I am going to make a separate “salute to the staff” speech tomorrow. Maybe I will start a tradition.

My favorite time in the U.S. Senate has been with the American history teachers whom I invite to come to the Senate floor before it opens while they are attending the academies that were created by the legislation I introduced in my maiden address 18 years ago.

After that address, Ted Kennedy, without my knowing it, went around and got 20 Democratic cosponsors. In the House, ROGER WICKER and MARSHA BLACKBURN helped pass the bill there, where they were then.

The teachers who come to the floor before we open invariably go to our desks. They try to find Daniel Webster’s desk. They look for the Kennedy brothers’ desk. They ask, “Where is Jefferson Davis’s desk?”—Jefferson Davis, who resigned the Senate to become President of the Confederacy—because they have heard the story that there is a chop mark on the desk that was imposed by a Union soldier when they captured Washington. The soldier was chopping the desk until his commander said: Stop that. We are here to save the Union, not to destroy it.

Invariably a teacher will ask: Senator, what would you like for us to take back to our students about being a U.S. Senator?

My reply is always the same: Please suggest to your students that they look at Washington, DC, as if it were a split-screen television. On one side are the confirmation hearings and the tweets, and on the other side you have Democratic and Republican Senators working together to strengthen national defense, National Laboratories, national parks, and the National Institutes of Health.

Please remind them of what a remarkable country this is: the strongest military, the best universities, producing 20 percent of all the money in the world for just 4 percent of the people. Tell them we are not perfect, but, as our Constitution says, we are always working to form a more perfect union and that, as Samuel Huntington wrote, most of our arguments are about conflicts among principles with which most of us agree, and most of our politics is about disappointments in not being able to reach the noble goals we set for ourselves, such as all men are created equal.

The late NAACP President Ben Hooks used to teach his University of

Memphis students, “America is a work in progress. We’ve come a long way, and we have a long way to go.”

Please remind your students that the rest of the world wishes they had our system of government and that the U.S. Senate has been and I hope continues to be the single most important institution that helps to unify our country by creating broad agreements that most of us can vote for and that the citizens of the United States will accept.

Finally, please tell them that I wake up every day thinking I might be able to do something good to help our country and that I go to bed most nights thinking that I have. Please tell them that it is a great privilege to be a U.S. Senator.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

TRIBUTE TO LAMAR ALEXANDER

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, it is such an honor to be here and to join my colleagues in paying tribute to Senator ALEXANDER today. As you can see, there are many who want to speak and have a few words to say.

Now, I think all of us wish that we could do this to a background of music with LAMAR playing the piano. That would definitely be the proper setting. But I am so pleased to stand and to honor the three terms of service that he has had here in this body and the way he has touched the lives not only of individuals in this body but millions of Tennesseans.

We know that he has—and he has talked about it in his remarks—worked with educators; he has worked with innovators; he has worked with the healthcare community; and he has worked, yes, with entertainers, many of whom hold him so dear and who call Tennessee home. In fact, when I was serving in the House and representing Tennessee’s 7th Congressional District, so many times I would look over here and I would think “What is LAMAR not working on today?” because he always had such a broad portfolio of issues that were demanding his attention. And what we know is he accepted that work to address that broad portfolio of issues.

His commitment for caring for the needs of all Tennesseans has really manifested itself in what Tennesseans like to see as a lifelong legacy that has really changed lives. As Governor, he worked to streamline our State’s government, was very successful in those efforts, and he brought that desire to streamline government with him when he came to the Senate. Indeed, this is work that has benefited all Tennesseans and all Americans.

As Governor of Tennessee, he was very successful in working to persuade Nissan automotive to come into our State. This started a new impact on our State with the auto industry. Then, as the auto industry needed suppliers, he turned his attention to infrastructure to make certain that the

roads, the highways, the access that were necessary were there to encourage this business.

As the former Secretary of Education under President George H. W. Bush, he couldn’t not put his personal touch on education policy, working tirelessly, as he said, to fix No Child Left Behind. This earned him the first-ever James Madison Award.

He has a reputation for, indeed, being a go-to lawmaker, and as chairman of HELP here in the Senate, he put a spotlight on the issues that affect the most sensitive aspects of Tennesseans’ lives, again benefiting all Americans.

I like the fact that he talked about bipartisanship and productivity. Between 2015 and 2019, during his term of service at HELP, he has reported 45 bills out of his committee that have become law—45 bills. As he mentioned, one of those was 21st Century Cures. As a Member in the House and working on originating this bill, we had said: We are going to make this bipartisan. And, indeed, we did, and we moved it from the House to the Senate. And yes, indeed, there were some days we thought: This is never going to happen. But, indeed, Senator ALEXANDER insisted, and, yes, it did happen.

He mentioned the Music Modernization Act, and I will tell you, this is vitally important to Tennesseans. As we worked this through the House and then it hit some bumps in the road, Senator ALEXANDER and Senator Hatch did such a great job of pushing this forward here in the Senate.

Then, last September, the Nashville Songwriters Association International awarded him the White Hat Award, which is what they give to legislators who have made a significant impact on the entertainment and music community.

Well, the highlight reel would be too long to cover in one speech. There are many who are waiting to express their thanks.

So, with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, a friend and a colleague who has served in this body for some 18 years now. I have had the pleasure of serving with this Senator on both the Rules Committee and the Appropriations Committee, and we sat next to each other as chairman or ranking member on two Appropriations subcommittees—first Interior and then Energy and Water. We have done that since 2009. It has been through these experiences that I truly have come to appreciate Senator ALEXANDER’s fairness, his interest in solving problems, and his bipartisanship.

Most of all, I so appreciate your friendship and the time we have had to talk together.

I do believe that the Senate is going to be diminished by the absence of this Senator.

Working closely as chair and ranking member of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, we have always been able to find agreement on the annual appropriations bill. That is because we shared a willingness to find common ground. And that is no small thing. We have consistently held comprehensive subcommittee hearings on a wide range of issues, from nuclear power and nuclear waste to dam safety, to devastating droughts in the West and the future of renewable energy.

We were also often among the first, if not the first subcommittee to negotiate our bill, draft it, and get it marked up by the full committee, and that includes 4 years of record-level funding for clean energy, the National Laboratories, supercomputing, and water projects. The focus has always been on a fair, open process that seeks compromise. And that track record speaks to the value we place on the process.

But more than anything, Senator ALEXANDER will be remembered as someone who dedicated his life to serving the people of Tennessee. Between his 8 years as Governor and 16 years as a Senator, he served longer than any Tennessean who has held both jobs. That doesn't include the 2 years he served as President George H.W. Bush's Secretary of Education.

His priorities have always been of great importance to Tennessee, whether Army Corps of Engineers funding for inland waters, particularly his favorite, Chickamauga—this is the first time I ever heard the word pronounced—Chickamauga Lock, which he often talks about in our hearings, or updating the way musicians are paid for their work.

He also led efforts to pass the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, which President Obama called a “Christmas miracle.”

As we hear promising news about coronavirus vaccines, we are reminded of the 21st Century Cures Act. That is Senator ALEXANDER's landmark 2016 bill that streamlined the drug and device approval process to bring treatments to market faster. He has a long record of work he can be proud of.

LAMAR, you have been a great colleague and a dear friend all these years in the Senate. I am proud of what we have achieved together. I will miss our dinners together and sitting next to you on the dais. I hope you enjoy a well-earned retirement with Honey and your beautiful family. Thank you so much for your service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I first met LAMAR ALEXANDER when he was a candidate for President 25 years ago. He was campaigning in the State of Maine, and after giving an articulate speech outlining his priorities and his policies, he proceeded to charm everyone by playing the piano. Little did I know then that we would one day serve as colleagues and friends in the U.S. Senate.

LAMAR, as you heard already today, is an extraordinary legislator. He has the ability to bring people together even on very contentious issues and hammer out a compromise. He is extremely effective because he is always well informed, focuses on the issue at hand, never gives up, and is willing to work across the aisle. He gets things done that matter not only to his constituents and his beloved Tennessee but also to citizens across this great country.

He has been an extraordinary leader on important issues that many of us care deeply about, such as biomedical research, education, and combating the opioid crisis. He is that rare individual who is far less interested in who gets the credit than in getting the job done. But, in fact, each of us who has had the privilege of working with LAMAR knows that he is the one who deserves the credit.

I have served for years with LAMAR on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, which he chairs. On one challenging issue after another, when others would throw up their hands and say “This is impossible; it simply cannot be done,” LAMAR never gives up the search for a solution and for common ground.

LAMAR has been so prolific as a legislator that it is difficult to single out one accomplishment among so many, but if forced to do so, I would say that the 21st Century Cures Act is his signature achievement. As the name implies, this law is a lasting legacy for him, and it is already providing lasting benefits for our country. Whether it is the BRAIN Initiative that will finally help us to make progress on diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other neurological illnesses, or the Cancer Moonshot that was done in honor of Beau Biden, or the funding that was included to look at the impact of lifestyles on our health, all of the provisions of this landmark law will improve the health of the American people far into the future, and it will be LAMAR ALEXANDER who deserves the credit.

As a close second, I would cite the educational reforms he drafted to replace and improve No Child Left Behind to give more autonomy back to the States and local school districts. That law—Every Student Succeeds Act—was a momentous bipartisan achievement, and LAMAR has already explained what it took to get the job done. It is not surprising that in 2016, the Nation's Governors named LAMAR the first recipient of the James Madison Award to recognize Members of Congress who support Federalism. As we have heard today, the Wall Street Journal called ESSA the “largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter-century.”

In addition to being a skillful legislator, LAMAR is also a wonderfully talented musician, as both a pianist and a singer. His hilarious performance at the annual Alfalfa Club dinner back in

2011 is legendary, and thanks to YouTube, it is also immortal.

LAMAR was a great friend, as he mentioned today, of the writer Alex Haley, the author of “Roots.” Mr. Haley's personal motto was “Find the good and praise it.” LAMAR quotes that often, and he lives by it. Optimism and gratitude, effectiveness and skill are his defining characteristics. To LAMAR, “the good” isn't simply what is pleasant; it is what is worthwhile, what makes us better people, better citizens, a better nation. If we follow the advice he gave us today, we will be a better Senate.

Not long ago, I was interviewed by a journalist for a retrospective on LAMAR's service in the Senate. She said that she happened to be in the Senate Dining Room on December 17, 2018—the day that LAMAR announced his intention to retire—and that a room usually alive with chatter was unusually quiet and tinged with sadness. That somber atmosphere was genuine and bipartisan.

LAMAR, I can't tell you how much personally I will miss serving with you. You are not only a great Senator and extraordinary legislator but a wonderful friend. Thank you so much for your many years of public service. I feel very honored to have served with you, to have learned from you, and I wish you and Honey all the best.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, his name was the answer to a frequently asked question. It is a question that used to come up in almost every Democratic meeting when we talked about legislative ideas and we talked about making progress on the floor of the Senate. And the question was this: Who can we call on the other side of the aisle? And the answer was almost always LAMAR ALEXANDER. We knew that if we presented an idea to him, he would not only be receptive and respectful, we knew that if he came on board, it would lend credibility to our effort, maybe even get a bill passed around here. But it would always have to wear a red tartan badge with it because there was an idea that he wanted to bring to the party, but it was worth it. It was worth it not only for the progress that you can make in terms of legislation, but it was worth it because it was part of developing a friendship.

Harry Truman used to recommend famously, “If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog.” I thought of that. I told you about it a few months ago when you were on one of those Sunday morning talk shows. You were broadcasting, I think, from your living room or family room at your home in Tennessee, and I couldn't get over that stuffed animal that was on the coffee table behind you. It just seemed like it was such an odd little piece of maybe personal pride to have that stuffed animal with you. It turned out it wasn't stuffed at all. It was Rufus, your dog, who slept through your entire performance, wasn't a bit moved by the fact

that you were on some Sunday morning talk show.

I want to thank you for many things, and I will mention a few of them in terms of legislation, but I especially want to thank you for—I brought a group of friends of mine down to Nashville, TN, and you made a recommendation list of places to stop, including the Bluebird, and then came by and joined us for lunch. You couldn't have been more gracious, and I thank you for that.

That is a trademark of LAMAR ALEXANDER's life and service to this country.

I could talk about many things, but I want to reflect on one that I think is timely and significant and is a reason a lot of us are wearing these masks. We are facing a pandemic with the COVID-19 virus. It has claimed 273,000 American lives, and I am afraid many more will follow. Millions—almost 13 million or more—have been infected by it. We want it to end, and we want it to end as quickly as possible.

The really shining ray of hope here is the possibility that a vaccine will be available soon. I pray it will be. I like to think that some of the things that we did together, with others, created an opportunity for that vaccine to be discovered.

It was 5 or 6 years ago that I approached you and I approached Senator PATTY MURRAY and ROY BLUNT with the idea that we ought to make a concerted, consistent effort to increase the NIH's budget by at least 5 percent per year.

Senator BLUNT, whom I see on the floor here today, I want to thank you. You took that cause to heart, along with Senator ALEXANDER.

We had the right appropriator and the right authorizer, and PATTY MURRAY served in both capacities so effectively.

We dramatically increased the NIH budget over the last 7, 8 years. I am hopeful, and I would like to think that some of those researchers and the work that they did was laying the groundwork for the discovery of these vaccines quickly in the United States and around the world. That is a legacy you won't soon forget.

Do you remember when we first got wind of this COVID-19 and I walked across the Chamber here and I said to you: I am worried about this protective equipment issue and how much we are reliant on going overseas for sourcing; would you join me at least in an effort to find out whether we are dependent on foreign sources at a time when we might desperately need this protective equipment for our own?

You said, sure, and we did it together and the investigation is underway. It may not serve us in this particular crisis, but it will serve in many generations to come to make sure we have reliable domestic sources in the United States.

I am not going to catalog all of the items that were mentioned earlier by

our colleagues Senator BLACKBURN and Senator COLLINS and Senator FEINSTEIN—the list goes on and on—but that increase by 38 percent of the National Institutes of Health was something our little quartet did together, and I am particularly proud to be part of it.

It wasn't, by far, the only thing that you have done. You championed an increase in the Department of Energy's Office of Science as chair of the Energy and Water Appropriations Committee, which Senator FEINSTEIN noted. Under your leadership with her, that office budget has increased by 38 percent since 2015.

You worked with the National Labs, like Oak Ridge, Argonne, Fermilab. Those are near and dear to me as well. And your support for research infrastructure provided essential help to this Lab and Labs across America.

I want to just close by saying this. Most of us were moved by your speech. I am sure it was a perfect illustration of your view of this Chamber and the good memories you have and a challenge to all of us to do better. I think the honest answer is it is not the rules of the Senate that make the difference; it is the Senators who make a difference. If we come to the chore of legislating with the inspiration of LAMAR ALEXANDER, we are going to get a lot done for America.

Thank you for your great service to our country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Senate is going to miss LAMAR ALEXANDER.

Listening to his farewell address right now made the fact that he is leaving all too real. I don't like to think of a U.S. Senate without LAMAR. He is a Senate institution and a Senate leader, and his leaving is a loss for this body and for the American people.

Any tribute to LAMAR has to mention his incredible career, which a lot has been alluded to already: his walk across the State of Tennessee, his 8 years as Tennessee Governor, his time as Secretary of Education under President George H.W. Bush, his stint as president of the University of Tennessee system, and his time as a professor at Harvard.

Then, of course, are his 18 years in the U.S. Senate, marked by significant legislative accomplishments on everything from education to opioids.

All that, and he makes a plaid shirt look good, although these days he has switched to a plaid face mask.

I first met LAMAR, like our colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, mentioned, when he attended a Lincoln Day Dinner in South Dakota in 1995, when he was running for President. I really started to get to know him a little bit when I came to the Senate in 2005.

LAMAR had already been here for a couple of years by that time. Of course, he already had an extraordinary career behind him. I know I was not the only

young Senator who regarded him as something of a mentor and a role model.

I share a couple of things with LAMAR; one is the fact that we were both Senate staffers long before we came to the Senate as elected officials. We weren't here at the same time. He was a little ahead of me. I came to the Senate the year Howard Baker left, but, like LAMAR, I have great appreciation for the contributions staffers make to the work that we do around here. I know many of LAMAR's staffers are in the Gallery today. As he leaves, also we lose a tremendous amount of brain power and talent that has contributed so significantly to the successes and accomplishments that he has had as a U.S. Senator.

The other is that he and I both have served as chairman of the Senate Republican conference, which is the messaging and communications office for Republicans in the Senate. I succeeded LAMAR as chairman of the Senate Republican conference in 2012. I will tell you, he is a very tough act to follow but an inspiring one because he did such a tremendous job in leading our messaging in the conference.

LAMAR has an ability to break down complex subjects and communicate them clearly. He can sum up an issue in one succinct phrase. He mentioned earlier, in his remarks, the idea that there ought to be one column, one idea; one speech, one idea. He really did master that.

I can recall his summary when we were talking a lot about the energy issue: We need to "find more and use less." That is about as clear a summary of our energy priorities as you can get.

Many of us used a phrase he popularized around here, too, in describing policies of the other side that we thought would be harmful to the economy as casting a big wet blanket over the economy. I don't know how many times you heard that coming out of our mouths, but it all originated with LAMAR ALEXANDER.

I think that ability to really break down complex issues and clearly explain them is one of the reasons he was such a good conference chairman and one of the reasons he has been so successful legislatively.

And he has been successful legislatively. You already heard a number of my colleagues talk about his many successes. Yet he has managed to get things passed around here that I don't think anyone thought could get passed, particularly in the polarized political environment that we have been in.

But LAMAR has an ability to bring people together from across the aisle. You heard our colleagues on both sides speak to that. He is very practical about the business of legislating. He focuses on what is actually possible to do and he finds the common ground and he gets things done.

You have heard of the America COMPETES Act, the Every Student Succeeds Act, the 21st Centuries Cures

Act, the Opioids Crisis Response Act, the Copyright Act, the Great American Outdoors Act. I could go on and on. Those, ladies and gentlemen, are major, major pieces of legislation, tremendous accomplishments of the Congress by the U.S. Senate, signed into law by the President, all of which couldn't have happened without the leadership of LAMAR ALEXANDER.

He has held multiple leadership positions in the Senate: chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and, as I said, Senate Republican conference chairman, but he has always been a leader, whether or not in an official leadership position or simply by virtue of who he is.

As I said before, LAMAR has been a mentor and role model to me and I know to many others here in the Senate.

But I also have to mention his personal warmth and hospitality to me and my wife when our daughter was studying at Belmont University in Nashville, TN. He and his wife Honey opened their home to us in Nashville. They hosted us. I am fortunate to be among those he mentioned were at their place in the Smokies, which was a fabulous experience. They took us to a Tennessee Titans game. They went above and beyond. And to this day, we are grateful for their warmth and generosity and for a chance to see LAMAR in his element in his beloved Tennessee.

LAMAR has dedicated much of his life to his State, his country, and nobody could be more deserving of retirement.

I will be surprised if he ever fully retires. I am pretty sure, even while sitting on his porch, he is still going to be dreaming up ways to make our country better.

LAMAR, thank you for your leadership and for your mentorship. Thank you for being a role model to so many of us. May God bless you in your retirement. I will miss you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I was not planning on speaking today, but I was so inspired by what Senator ALEXANDER had to say about his career and about the Senate that I wanted to share a word or two of reflection on what he said.

Anybody who has spent any time around Washington, DC, or even around this Capitol knows there are statues built all over this town of people nobody remembers. When I go by one of those statues in Washington—whether it is in a circle somewhere in a traffic stop or in the hallway in the Capitol—I think about the importance of dying at the right time. You want to die at a moment when statues are in vogue if you are going to have a statue.

But there is no—none of these people are ever going to be remembered in the long view of history. The stoic philosophers on whom we base so much, or at least attempt to base so much of what

we do here, had a solution to that. Their solution was—whether it was the Greek or Roman philosophers—their solution was: Do your best. Show up and make a contribution. Do your best. Don't worry about how people are going to remember you. Don't worry about your own mortality.

So few of us follow that advice. I think LAMAR ALEXANDER embodies that. As President of the University of Tennessee, as Governor, as the Secretary of Education, as a Senator, in every one of those jobs, it has always been about doing his best.

In a Chamber filled with people who think they have a monopoly on wisdom, LAMAR has never stopped learning. He has always been curious. Up to this day—I will bet today, he probably got up and asked somebody on his staff or one of his colleagues to tell him about something he wants to learn more about so he can be more effective and make a greater difference so he can do his best.

The Senate is going to be diminished by LAMAR's absence. It is hard to believe we can be any more diminished than we are, but we are going to be diminished by LAMAR leaving.

Susan and I were lucky enough to be invited to his home, spend a weekend there. I am going to say something now I never said to LAMAR ALEXANDER. He gave us the great privilege of standing in the family cemetery in Eastern Tennessee, in his beloved Smoky Mountains, where he will forever keep the windmills out. As I stood there a little awkwardly in the cemetery—because that is not usually part of a tour—all I could think about was how lucky LAMAR and Honey were to know that would be the place where they would be and that long after they were remembered by anybody, they would know that they had done their best; that they had always done their best.

What I would say to my colleagues today is, we have an opportunity to follow LAMAR's example and take him up on what he said. We are not memorializing LAMAR today. He is going to have a lot more years left to contribute to his State, his community, and to the country, but he won't be in the Senate, and we are in the Senate.

We could work in the Senate that works 5 days a week or even 6 days a week. Sign me up for that Senate. We could work in a Senate that has 25 amendments in a bill instead of 25 amendments in a year, as we did last year, because there is no other body in America or in this democracy, as LAMAR said, that is set up to decide the hardest questions that our country is facing and to make those decisions stick. That is what LAMAR ALEXANDER said to us today.

He has left us with a challenge, and I hope we will take him up on it because there is no excuse for the way this place has worked, and the American people are tired of hearing that it has been the other side's fault. There are 100 people who can fix this place, and I

hope we will. I can't think of a greater legacy for LAMAR to leave than that of a Senate that actually works. That is what the country deserves, and that is the inspiration that LAMAR ALEXANDER has set for me.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we all know that LAMAR ALEXANDER is a person of tremendous character and judgment, and it is not just because he asked that young woman in the red shorts that he met at that softball game so many years ago to marry him, who happens to be from Victoria, TX, which demonstrates his enormous good judgment. Certainly, we wish him and Honey the best in this next chapter of their lives.

When I think about LAMAR ALEXANDER, I think about all of the Lamarisms, and we have heard some of them here today: "Find the good and praise it"—quotes his friend Alex Haley, which I think kind of speaks to the optimistic, positive view of life that we could use more of. Then I remember other words. He said: If you want to get a standing ovation before any group of individuals, you need to say, "It is time to put the teaching of American history and civics back into its rightful place in our schools so our children can grow up learning what it means to be an American." He has talked about Alex Haley, his friend, who told him how to give a speech by telling a story.

Aristotle also had an idea about how to give a great speech. He basically broke it down to three components. One is the logical argument, another is the emotional argument, but then another is about establishing your authority. It is about the character of the speaker. When I think about LAMAR, as he has demonstrated again here today, the thing I appreciate about him the most is not just what he has accomplished here but his incredible character and positive impact on our Senate and on our country. It has been because people know that his heart is in the right place. It is his doing it for all the right reasons that we admire him so much.

I would just point out, as I told LAMAR previously, that I admired LAMAR ALEXANDER long before I met him—when I voted for him in the 1996 Republican primary for President. Unfortunately, he dropped out of that race shortly thereafter, so I told him I wasted my vote, but I have been an admirer for a long time.

(Laughter.)

LAMAR and I also share something else in common. It is about his predecessor as well as mine. He is a person by the name of Sam Houston. I occupy the Senate seat first held by Sam Houston when Texas became a State. Of course, he originally came from Tennessee. He had happened to be a Governor of Tennessee before he had left and gone to Texas. Later, he became the Governor of Texas and basically stepped down because he was a

Union man, recruited by Andrew Jackson. He loved the Union. He did not agree with secession, but, of course, he went to Texas and became a victorious general of the decisive Battle of San Jacinto. He became the President of the Republic of Texas for the same reason. The reason the Texas flag and the American flag fly at the same height is that we were an independent nation before we became part of the United States. I have heard it said that you could never write a novel based on the life of Sam Houston because nobody would believe it. I have read plenty about him, and I still find that to be true.

Yet, as I indicated, as proud as Texans are of Sam Houston's contribution to our history and our State, we know we can't claim him entirely because he grew up in Maryville, TN—the same town that LAMAR ALEXANDER did—and went on to become Governor, as I mentioned a moment ago.

Sam Houston's portrait hangs above my desk in the Hart Office Building because it helps to remind me of my responsibilities and of the incredible history and contribution that he made and that, hopefully, each of us can make.

While you find Sam Houston's picture above my desk, you will find his walking stick in LAMAR ALEXANDER's office, which is just down the hall. The many Tennesseans who have visited LAMAR during his time in the Chamber have seen the words "Sam Houston," "Texas," and "Lone Star" engraved on its gold cap, and according to LAMAR, several Texans have tried to run off with it. Fortunately, they haven't been successful.

The truth is, you can't get through a Texas history class—or at least you shouldn't—without hearing about the pivotal role of the Volunteer State within the history of my State. I always kid LAMAR. I say: The Tennesseans who went to Texas who fought at the Alamo and in the Battle of San Jacinto were just one step ahead of a creditor or of an aggrieved spouse. This was a rough-and-tumble group that came from Tennessee to found Texas.

There are other Tennesseans, people like Davy Crockett and others, who went to Texas and created our State. The State of Texas has many reasons to be grateful to the contributions of the sons and daughters of Tennessee, and one of those great sons is LAMAR. He has dedicated his life to public service. As we know, it has led him through an incredible number of important offices.

Yet I think, to me, the thing that has even more led to his legislative accomplishments and that has made LAMAR so effective is that we know we can trust him. We know his character. We know that when he says something, it is true, and we have seen it time and again, when LAMAR has used that character and that trust to pass historic legislation in this Chamber. As we have all come to know, when you are work-

ing side by side with LAMAR on legislation, you are bound to get things done because he has cracked the code. He knows how to do it.

I have been proud to work with LAMAR on legislation to address the opioid epidemic, to support our service-members and veterans, to protect health coverage, and to ensure that folks across the country have the opportunity to take advantage of the American dream. His presence has been constant throughout our time. We came to the Senate at the same time, and, of course, his retirement makes that all bittersweet.

So I thank our colleague from Tennessee for his friendship over many years and, as we have heard from Senator THUNE and others, for the example he has shown to the rest of us as to how to be an effective Member of the U.S. Senate. I also thank him for his decades of service to the country. I don't expect LAMAR to follow in the footsteps of Sam Houston and run for Governor of Texas, but I know he has many more contributions to make to our great country, and I wish him and Honey all the best during this next chapter of their lives. I am sure he is looking forward to spending a little more time in their beloved Smoky Mountains.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I have learned in my time in the Senate that if you want to get something done across the aisle, you really need the following: You need someone on the other side who is just as committed to working together as you are, and that Member needs to have the trust of Members on your side of the aisle and on his own, and you both need to be willing to set aside egos and listen and get a realistic understanding of whether the person on the other side of the negotiating table can reach an agreement with you that upholds your principles without compromising his own.

Now, what I have laid out might not sound that unusual or rare, but it is actually pretty tough to find these days. I have been very lucky that the Senator whom we honor today on the floor—my colleague and friend, Chairman LAMAR ALEXANDER, of Tennessee—is someone who has managed it time and again.

I don't think anyone, least of all Senator ALEXANDER himself, would be surprised to hear me say that we are as likely to disagree as to agree on many matters. I bring my Washington State values to the table, and he brings his Tennessee values, so you can imagine how that has gone from time to time. Yet, despite our different perspectives and our different approaches we take to policymaking, we have also been able to see where our values and the interests of our States and our country converge.

We both understood that the broken No Child Left Behind law needed to be fixed. LAMAR listened to me, which I so

appreciated, when I told him we should write a bill together rather than to amend the Republican bill that he had begun working on. With our HELP Committee members, we were able to write and pass a new K-12 public education bill that fixed the most broken parts of No Child Left Behind. It included Federal guardrails so we could understand how all of our students perform. It dedicated resources to improving the schools that needed it the most. It also allowed for historic steps forward on early education.

We laid the groundwork together for new investments in lifesaving biomedical innovation and research through the 21st Century Cures Act, including the Beau Biden Cancer Moonshot.

We worked together to pass landmark legislation to boost our response to the opioid epidemic, to strengthen our public health preparedness programs, and to permanently fund historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions. We not only passed each of these bills, but we did so time and again with huge majorities from this Senate. Now, even still, Chairman ALEXANDER and I, along with our colleagues in the House, are working to get legislation across the finish line to finally ban surprise medical bills.

What I have just laid out is by no means a full list at all of Senator ALEXANDER's accomplishments as chairman. It doesn't even include quite a few things he is still trying to get done as we speak. Senator ALEXANDER's focus on working together has helped countless families in his home State of Tennessee, in my home State of Washington, and nationwide.

My Democratic colleagues and I thank Chairman ALEXANDER for the tone and manner with which he has led the HELP Committee over the past 6 years—some of them, admittedly, rockier than others but, throughout, guided by his steady leadership and commitment to working together.

For myself, as someone who shares the drive to not only fight for what you believe in but also to look for common ground, I thank my colleague from Tennessee for the many opportunities to dig in and get to work that he has provided, for being willing to hear me and my colleagues out again and again when necessary, and for looking so often for common ground, for another problem we could solve, and for being willing not just to keep talking but to keep listening as well.

Finally, I know none of this would have been possible without the support and strength Senator ALEXANDER has received from Honey, his wife, and I acknowledge and thank her for her contribution as well.

Lamar, you will be thrilled to be back full time in the State you love so much—I know that—but I and members of the HELP Committee want you to know we are going to miss you terribly here in the Senate. Thank you so much for all you have done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators CANTWELL, BLUNT, ROMNEY, SCHUMER, and I be able to complete our remarks before the next vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I don't want to prolong this discussion except to make one additional point about the unselfishness and humility of this hero of the Senate, whose remarks we will long remember today.

There is a framed piece of legislation that hangs on the wall in my conference room in the Dirksen Building. It is, in fact, a piece of legislation that Senator ALEXANDER chose to mention as one of his signature accomplishments, and that is the American History and Civics Education Act, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush. There is a story about how I came to have that piece of legislation, which Senator ALEXANDER worked so hard on, on the wall in my conference room.

I live in North Mississippi, and, as such, I listen to Memphis television a lot. During LAMAR ALEXANDER's first race for Senator, on came a commercial, and, basically, it said just what our friend from Texas just quoted—that this candidate for Senator, former Governor LAMAR ALEXANDER, wanted to pass an American civics education bill to teach our children what it means to be an American. I stopped at that moment, and I pointed to that television screen, and I said: If that man gets elected, I want to be part of that bill because that is exactly what we need.

So Senator ALEXANDER introduced the bill here in the Senate. I introduced it in the House of Representatives. We made public appearances together, one in Memphis, TN, that I will always remember. Eventually, the bill gained a lot of support over here, and Senator KENNEDY, as has been mentioned, was someone at the forefront of that effort.

We were able to pass it in the House. It went to conference to iron out the details, and a decision had to be made as to which one would actually be enacted by both Houses and go to the President for his signature.

LAMAR ALEXANDER allowed the piece of legislation introduced by a relatively junior Member of the House named ROGER WICKER to be that piece of legislation that went on to the White House, to the Oval Office, to be signed by the President of the United States.

So that is how that piece of legislation hangs on my wall as a bill authored by Representative ROGER WICKER but passed very much with the efforts of Senator ALEXANDER also.

I just wanted to mention that, not to prolong this discussion but to mention that act of selflessness and humility as

another attribute of this great Senator to whom we say farewell today.

I think the remarks we heard from Senator ALEXANDER will be taught at civics classes and college-level government classes for decades and decades to come. It was so profound, and it is a real honor that a piece of legislation that he and I worked on together will always be a part of what I consider to be those immortal remarks.

So I thank you very much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor, too, to thank the Senator from Tennessee for his service to our Nation and for his work here in the U.S. Senate.

Some of my colleagues have already mentioned the brevity of words with which Senator ALEXANDER can deliver a message. I, too, remember his comments as a Rules Committee member, on the inaugural address, and really capturing the moment of why a transition of power is so important to our Nation. And it struck me that we really had a poet or a writer among us, someone who could sense and feel the moment of what we were going through and express it in words. So I have no doubt that some writing is in LAMAR's future here, and I look forward to seeing that.

But I wanted to rise today to thank him for his service and what it has meant to my State and to our Nation. My colleague from Washington talked about their work together on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. I, too, want to thank you for the CARES Act, and I remember your recognition on FOX News about stem cell research and the great work that that has led to.

So we are appreciative of those research dollars, but I want to focus on a role that maybe has not gotten as much attention—the historic role you have played on our energy budget and our National Laboratory budget.

I so appreciate the background of your State and the background of focus on energy funding, from the National Laboratory perspective, which has had to have a constant flow and constantly it has been challenged. Yet it has put every step forward because of the level of investment in helping us make our Nation more secure, create more innovation, and create more jobs. So thank you for holding steadfast on the National Laboratory budget.

I also want to thank you for your work on the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, which we worked together on, which, both, commemorated the history of our Nation and our Manhattan Project at, both, Oak Ridge and at Richland, WA, and Hanford, and to just thank you for the constant focus on the cleanup budget that we have had to have in the Energy Department, as it related to Hanford.

There was a time when we had many cleanup projects around the Nation,

and it was very easy to come together and say that we had to get Savannah River, we had to get Oak Ridge, we had to get Colorado, we had to get Idaho, and we had to get Hanford. But as those projects made progress, a lot of people forgot about what it took to clean up Hanford. So I appreciate your constant focus on helping us to get the dollars necessary for cleanup at Hanford.

I also appreciate, recently, your help on making sure that people didn't overstep on the National Nuclear Security Administration and turn that over to a Defense oversight of people but kept it within the Department of Energy. I so appreciate that.

But I will be forever grateful for your focus on public lands. We have a saying in my State: Environmentalists make great ancestors. So I don't know if you want that environmentalist term associated with your name, but I am pretty sure you do want the stewardship.

And the man from the Great Smoky Mountains helped us deliver a monumental piece of legislation by convincing the President of the United States to support the budgetary impact of combining both the national parks enhancement program, which is basically taking care of the national parks backlog, which was in the billions of dollars, and also fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a battle that had been going on for more than a decade.

So I want to thank you for that, LAMAR. I want to thank you on behalf of the Washingtonians who will go to so many special places, who will get to visit and commune with their families, who will be able to have outdoor experiences, who will be able to really understand the grandeur of Mother Earth. So thank you for pulling off what seemed to be like an impossible effort to convince people to make that level of investment.

We are going to miss the harmony of your voice and the harmony of your legislative skills, but we are not going to say permanently good-bye to you because we hope that you will be sending us messages just like the one you sent today and reminding us that we can do better.

So thank you, LAMAR, for your contribution, in a lot of your life, to these very important issues that affect so many of us. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I first met LAMAR ALEXANDER in 1995, when he spoke at Boston's Lincoln Day Dinner. Like today, he was folksy, good humored, thoughtful, and impressive.

I remarked to Ann that he was surely going to go places. Of course, he had already gone places by then, but he ran for President the next year. One thing LAMAR and I agree on is that the best candidate for President does not always win. I think he may well have been just that.

You all know that he served as president of a university, Governor, Senator, and Secretary of Education. I have watched firsthand as he has led the Senate's Committee on Health and Education. I don't know any person who has worked longer, harder, and more effectively for the well-being of America's children than LAMAR ALEXANDER.

His service extends, of course, beyond the children. As we have endured the COVID-19 pandemic, he has led the Senate as we have helped to guide and fund our national response. His healthcare expertise and his determination to keep each of us informed and involved has been invaluable.

While America's response to the pandemic may not have been exemplary, LAMAR ALEXANDER's leadership of the Senate's role has been superb. The speed at which we will have a vaccine is, in no small measure, a testament to his determination and vision.

But LAMAR is much more than a Senator. I have seen the devotion he has for his wife and family. I have watched him entertain rooms full of celebrating Republicans with his piano and singing. And I have experienced very personally the kindness and graciousness that have long characterized this man. He was the first Senator to come to meet me when I joined this body.

His impact on the Senate, on the State of Tennessee, and on the Nation extends well beyond his legislative accomplishments and leadership. His greatest impact has been that of his personal character. He is a man without guile. He is true to his conscience. He speaks and acts with truth and honesty. He cares about people and endeavors to help others. He is a genuine friend, as is evidenced by the many members of his team wearing plaid masks around this room.

He has used his talent and energy not to aggrandize himself but to serve. It could be said of LAMAR ALEXANDER that he is a great American of exemplary character. We are a better people because of LAMAR ALEXANDER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I think Mark Twain said, among many other things, that there is nothing more troubling than a great example. And, as we have had all of these speeches today, I felt less and less adequate as the speakers talked about the great things that LAMAR has done, the great things he stands for, the incredible character that defines his life and his work. It has been wonderful to be here and to see the appreciation that Senators have for somebody who is proud to be a Senator.

Not that often do you get to start a last speech in the Senate referring to somebody else's maiden speech over almost 50 years ago. But that kind of sense of the Senate, that sense of community, that split screen that LAMAR talked about with educators, where you do have the one screen where it ap-

pears that nobody can get along and get anything done—and, particularly in the Senate, you have this relatively small community of people, all of whom got here by figuring out, normally, how to get along with other people, as one of their attributes of getting to the Senate. And then you have rules in the Senate that require you to get along to get anything done. So you have that other screen that doesn't get nearly the attention. But when you do look at the accomplishments, even at a time of great frustration, those accomplishments have been significant, and so many of them have included LAMAR.

I knew LAMAR before I came to the Senate, but, particularly, the last 10 years of working with LAMAR in the Senate have been great for me, and the time that Abby and I have been able to spend with him and Honey have been great.

He says things in passing that really define the opportunity to be here in such a significant way. We have heard many of them today. There are others I think of often—one LAMAR told me not too long ago, when I was talking about how well our staffs work together. He said: Well, it always seemed to me that when the Senators obviously got along, the staff figures that out and they understand they are supposed to get along too.

LAMAR is blessed with a great staff. It will be interesting to see the new standard of having that other speech that so significantly talks about the staff and what the staff means. I have a great staff—many of us do—but when those staffs work together, as opposed to looking for reasons they shouldn't work together, things happen.

I remember LAMAR told me one day: They always remember the last thing you do.

And if that turns out to be the case, at least the last Senate year of Senator ALEXANDER has been extraordinary, as others have been.

But this year I had a chance, as the appropriating chairman of the committee that LAMAR is the authorizing chairman for—and, by the way, he also sits right beside me on the Appropriations Committee in most of our hearings when Senator SHELBY isn't able to be there, the chairman of our full committee. But in this last year, particularly from March on, we have done so many things together.

In March, April, May, June, there was almost never a day when we didn't have at least one call with somebody who is running a laboratory or someone at the FDA or someone who understood this investment arm we had, BARDA, that had been designed about 10 years earlier but never used as we have used it to bring the private sector and public sector together in partnership in a way that advances both tests and vaccines.

We would spend sometimes hours a day in a series of 30-minute phone calls, trying to put the pieces of this puzzle together. I remember one day we

were talking to someone at the White House, and the comment from his part of the conversation was knowing how many other conversations we had had that day.

If people had any idea how much the Senate and the two of you—he was saying at that moment—are committed to get things done, they would be surprised because that is a story that never gets told.

So much of the story of LAMAR—his work here and the good spirit he brings to that work—isn't told, but it is so very obvious, certainly for me.

One of the great gifts of my working life has been for LAMAR ALEXANDER to be such an important part of it for the last 10 years. I am grateful for it; I am grateful for him. I look forward to his continued friendship and advice.

I think Senator ALEXANDER, like many of us, is more of a next-chapter guy than a last-chapter guy. He is neither shy nor retiring. I expect him to continue to have great impact in his State and in our country. And, in my case, I hope he continues to have great impact in my life.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I spoke earlier about Senator ALEXANDER, but I would like to compliment my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. This is a fine and rare moment of bipartisanship and support of somebody we all admire and respect.

NOMINATION OF ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS

Madam President, now back to regular Senate business—I would like to conclude my remarks from earlier this morning on Senate business, but first I want to mention that I just met with another of President-Elect Biden's exceptionally qualified slate of Cabinet nominees over video conference, and that was Alejandro Mayorkas for the Department of Homeland Security.

No one exemplifies the hope and promise of America better than Ali, an immigrant from Cuba who has risen to the highest echelons of public service in his adopted country. We had an excellent conversation about how to restore integrity and trust at DHS and how to make this into a department that is not just anti-immigrant but relishes the fact that immigrants are so important to the future of America.

Now I will note that in previous administrations, the Secretary of Homeland Security has been confirmed by the Senate on Inauguration Day for President Obama and for President Trump. The Senate should continue the tradition and quickly confirm Ali Mayorkas for the third time so that he can get to work on day one of the Biden administration.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, now, on Senate business, before the end of the year, the Senate has three major priorities: Fund the government; pass the annual Defense bill; and deliver another round of significant COVID relief.